



PIMA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MEASLES CONTINUES TO CIRCULATE IN PIMA COUNTY

Tucson, Arizona – March 31, 2008 – Pima County Health Department is reporting nine (9) confirmed cases of measles, and considers it possible, and likely, that transmission of the disease could occur in the community as well as in health care settings.

Measles is a respiratory illness caused by the rubeola virus. Symptoms include fever, cough, runny nose, red eyes for a few days followed by rash. Complications from measles, which can range from an ear infection to encephalitis, are of utmost concern to public health practitioners. One to two children in a thousand die from the measles infection. Pregnant women who develop measles are more likely to miscarry, deliver prematurely, or have a very low birth weight baby.

“Measles is extremely contagious, so the best way to prevent the disease is to get vaccinated,” states Dr. Michelle McDonald, Chief Medical Officer for the Health Department. “Because of the greater vulnerability to severe disease in infants and very young children, we are recommending an accelerated schedule for vaccinating children.” A dose of vaccine is recommended between the ages of 6 and 12 months of age. As this will not create enough immunity to be long lasting, two subsequent doses are recommended, starting on the first birthday.

Adults should also insure their immunity if they have significant contact with those most vulnerable to severe or complicated measles infection. This would include adults who come into contact with infants under the age of one (especially if under 6 months) or individuals who are immuno-compromised. Today, more people are immuno-compromised from disease or medications than in the past when measles was widespread. Many of these people may be as vulnerable to measles complications as young infants.

Residents are urged to contact the health care facility or doctor’s office prior to arrival if measles is suspected (especially if a few days of fever has been experienced and a rash is now developing). If sick, wait to visit newborns or other persons in the hospital. This is especially important if you have symptoms that may be due to measles infection.

For more information log onto www.pimahealth.org or call 243.7797.

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